

Information Resource Center, Public Affairs Section
U.S. Embassy Jakarta

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY

On Religious Freedom Day, let us pledge our constant support to all who struggle against religious oppression and rededicate ourselves to fostering peace with those whose beliefs differ from our own.

- Barack Obama -

Religious Freedom Day



Interfaith prayers service at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, in Los Angeles.

Each year, since 1993, the President declares January 16th to be Religious Freedom Day, and, as in 2005, calls upon Americans to “observe this day through appropriate events and activities in homes, schools, and places of worship.”

The day is the anniversary of the passage, in 1786, of the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom. Thomas Jefferson drafted the legislation and considered it one of his greatest achievements. It stopped the practice of taxing people to pay for the support of the local clergy, and it protected the civil rights of people to express their religious beliefs without suffering discrimination.

The men who drafted the U.S. Constitution leaned heavily on Jefferson’s statute in establishing the First Amendment’s guarantee of religious freedom. Today, that protection is as important as ever.

Religious Freedom Day is not “celebrate-our-diversity day.” Freedom means the freedom to respectfully disagree. Religious Freedom Day is first and foremost a time to acknowledge one of our most important civil liberties.

Source: http://religiousfreedomday.com/images/RFD_Guidebook_2011.pdf

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The American Religious Landscape



America has a diverse religious landscape, and immigration is transforming it even more. While most Americans are devout, they are tolerant of other peoples’ religious beliefs and are strikingly nondogmatic in the sense of not believing their own religion to be the only path to salvation, according to the Pew Research Center.

The Landscape Survey documents how immigration is adding even more diversity to the American religious quilt. For example, Muslims, roughly two-thirds of whom are immigrants, now account for roughly 0.6% of the U.S. adult population.

The complete survey is accessible at: <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>

What the Public Knows about Religion

At least two-thirds know..	%
Public school teachers cannot lead class in prayer	89
Atheist is someone who does not believe in God	85
Mother Teresa was Catholic	82
Moses was the Bible figure who led the exodus from Egypt	72
Jesus was born in Bethlehem	71
Constitution says government shall neither establish nor interfere with religion	68
Most people in Pakistan are Muslim	68

U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey

On average, Americans correctly answer 16 of the 32 religious knowledge questions on the survey by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life. Atheists and agnostics average 20.9 correct answers. Jews and Mormons do about as well, averaging 20.5 and 20.3 correct answers, respectively.

Other findings of the U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey, a nationwide poll conducted from May 19 through June 6, 2010, among 3,412 Americans age 18 and older, on landlines and cell phones, in English and Spanish:

- On world religions other than Christianity, about six-in-ten Americans (62%) know that most people in India are Hindus.
- About half know that Ramadan is the Islamic holy month (52%) and can name the Koran as the Muslim holy book (54%).

- Roughly one-third (36%) correctly associate striving for nirvana with Buddhism.

Many Americans are devoted readers of Scripture: More than a third (37%) say they read the Bible or other Holy Scriptures at least once a week, not counting worship services. But Americans as a whole are much less inclined to read other books about religion. Nearly half of Americans who are affiliated with a religion (48%) say they "seldom" or "never" read books (other than Scripture) or visit websites about their own religion, and 70% say they seldom or never read books or visit websites about other religions.

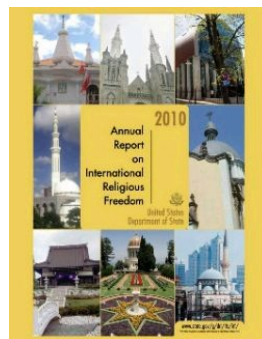
Read more: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1745/religious-knowledge-in-america-survey-atheists-agnostics-score-highest>

U.S. Department of State The Office of International Religious Freedom

The Office of International Religious Freedom has the mission of promoting religious freedom as a core objective of U.S. foreign policy. Headed by Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, its Office Director and staff monitor religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, recommend and implement policies in respective regions or countries, and develop programs to promote religious freedom.

The Office released the Annual Report on International Religious Freedom and it is submitted to Congress annually in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998.

2010 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom—Indonesia



The constitution provides for freedom of religion. The government generally respected religious freedom for the six officially recognized religions; however, ongoing restrictions, particularly on religions not sanctioned by the government and sects of the recognized religions considered deviant, were exceptions.

The government prosecuted some individuals responsible for religiously tinged violence in Sulawesi and the Maluku. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the government prevented several vigilante actions. However, it failed to prevent abuse and discrimination against religious groups by other private actors and at times failed to punish perpetrators of violence. Some

hard-line Muslim groups opposed to religious pluralism engaged in violent activity against free religious expression, and various other activities deemed contradictory to their view of Islamic values. Members of minority religious groups continued to experience some official discrimination in the form of administrative difficulties, often in the context of civil registration of marriages and births, and/or the issuance of identity cards. There were a number of reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with government and civil society leaders as part of its overall policy to promote human rights, including sponsorship of the Indonesia-U.S. Interfaith Dialogue in Jakarta. The embassy promotes religious freedom and tolerance through exchanges and civil society development programs.

Read more: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148869.htm>

Articles

Religious Freedom a Core Element of U.S. Foreign Policy. By Jane Morse, *America.gov*, Nov. 17, 2010

Promoting religious freedom is a core element of U.S. diplomacy, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said at the November 17 release of the 2010 Annual Report to Congress on International Religious Freedom.

The purpose of the report, Clinton said, is not to pass judgment, but to provide useful information in the effort to secure the basic human right to believe, or not to believe, and practice, or not practice, the religion of one's personal choice.

Read more: [http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2010/](http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2010/Novem-ber/20101117161522enaj0.3227655.html#)

Novem-ber/20101117161522enaj0.3227655.html#

"Unlikely Partners": Protect Religious Freedom. By W. Cole Durham Jr., *America.gov*, Oct 28, 2010

In a democracy, different religious groups often coexist side by side. America.gov asked religious leaders and scholars what sharing space means to them.

Read more: [http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2010/](http://www.america.gov/st/democracyhr-english/2010/October/20101025134808enaj0.4120447.html)

October/20101025134808enaj0.4120447.html

Religious Freedom Day Marks American Tradition of Good Will. By Michael Jay Friedman, *America*

Americans are a religious people. A solid majority pray every day and nearly half attend religious services at least weekly — but, consistent with principles established even before the United States secured its independence, they typically view faith as a freedom reserved to individuals, regardless of their particular beliefs, and one protected from government interference.

Read more: [http://www.america.gov/st/peopleplace-english/2009/](http://www.america.gov/st/peopleplace-english/2009/Janu-ary/20060118181942jnmamdeirf0.3776972.html)

Janu-ary/20060118181942jnmamdeirf0.3776972.html

Religious Freedom Laws Help Create Culture of Tolerance. By Louise Fenner, *America.gov*, Aug 25, 2008

An openness to immigration and laws protecting religious freedom helped create the conditions for religious tolerance in the United States, says an expert on immigration, religion and urban issues in America who has researched a neighborhood in New York City he calls "perhaps the most extreme case of religious pluralism in the world."

Read more: [http://www.america.gov/st/peopleplace-english/2008/](http://www.america.gov/st/peopleplace-english/2008/August/20080825143428xlrennef0.4305994.html)

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Annual Report of the U.S Commission on International Religious Freedom

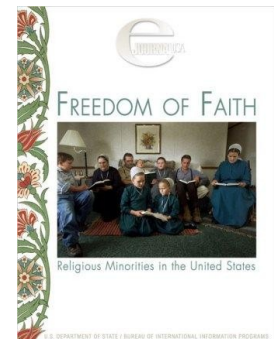
Religious Freedom Conditions in Indonesia in 2010
(Covering April 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)



Indonesia's transition to democracy since 1998 has contributed to an overall improvement in conditions for human rights in the country. The majority of Indonesia's diverse religious communities operate openly and with few restrictions, and there are vibrant public discussions among politicians, religious leaders, and civil society about the role of religion in political life. The government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has taken positive steps to address terrorism and past sectarian violence in the regions of Ambon and Central Sulawesi, to bring peace to the region of Aceh, and to build popular support for democracy. However, during his presidency, religious minorities have experienced harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and even violence perpetuated by groups espousing intolerance and extremism under the banner of Islamic orthodoxy.

Read more: <http://www.uscifr.gov/images/ar2010/indonesia2010.pdf>

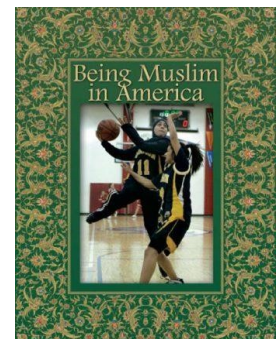
E-Publications



Freedom of Faith

The principle of religious freedom is a cherished right in the United States, one that has historical roots older than the formation of the nation itself.

Read more: <http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0808.html>



Being Muslim in America

With freedom, faith, and hard work, each successive wave of immigrants has added its distinctive contributions to the American story. And today, this story is the Muslim-American story too.

Read more: <http://www.america.gov/publications/books/being-muslim-in-america.html>

This information package is compiled by the IRC to commemorate
Religious Freedom Day January 16, 2011

Based on mutual respect and shared values, the US Mission works with Indonesia to strengthen democracy, sustain the environment, promote prosperity, enhance understanding and ensure security for our people, our nations, and our region.

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Monday to Friday; from 07:30 to 16:00

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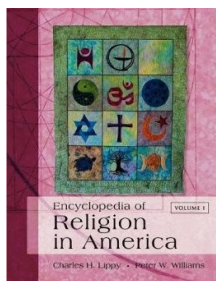
Books, articles, and web-sites described in this info package present a diversity of views in order to keep our IRC users abreast of current issues in the United States. These items represent the views and opinions of the authors and do not necessary reflect official U.S. Government policy.

IRC Books



Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America/Guntav Niebuhr. New York, Viking, 2008. ISBN: 978-0670019564.

The United States is the most religiously diverse nation in the world, with the most religiously diverse population in history. The author traces the roots of religious freedom in America, the setbacks and the triumphs.



Encyclopedia of Religion in America, 4-Volume Set/ Charles H Lippy and Peter W Williams. Washington DC, CQ Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0872895805.

This authoritative four-volume reference work explains the origins, development, adaptation, influence, and interrelations of the many faiths practiced, including major world religions, new religious sects, cults, and religious movements that originated or had an influence in the United States.

Interesting Sites:

- Birthplace of America's Religious Freedom
<http://www.america.gov/flushing.html>
- Protecting Religious Freedom without Limiting Free Speech
http://www.america.gov/religious_freedom.html
- Photo Gallery-Houses of Worship Show Diversity of Faiths in United States
http://www.america.gov/multimedia/photogallery.html#/30145/religious_worship/

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"The United States government must not undertake to run the Churches. When an individual, in the Church or out of it, becomes dangerous to the public interest he must be checked." - Abraham Lincoln